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Seven Firefox Plug-ins That Improve Online Privacy

Worried about preserving your privacy in an online world where privacy is disappearing? Here are seven Firefox add-ons that will help.

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As strange as it might sound, there are times when I wish for the old days of the Internet circa the early 1990's. The days of Mosaic and Lynx, where there was no Flash, no Javascript and no Java. A simpler time where [protecting your privacy and security wasn't as essential as it is today](#).

Time travel isn't an option for securing my browser. But Firefox gives me it all and then some. The number-two browser (with 32 percent market share), Firefox is a cross platform, standards based, open source browser. It is feature rich and has supernumerary add-ons to extend its functionality. In the spirit of Open Source, its community maintains a focus on security and has a strong record of swiftly patching known vulnerabilities, faster in some cases than most others in the market.

[Firefox](#) isn't just a killer app; it's also a pillar of the Internet community. When it comes to security and privacy, the Firefox picture is compelling, with over 600 plug-ins related to privacy and security. Acknowledging the current state of privacy and security, these plug-ins are a welcome addition to any browsing experience.

My goal in this article is to highlight a few of my favorites with the hopes that you too will take advantage of them.

NoScript

NoScript is a powerful add-on that blocks and blacklists Javascript, Java, Flash, and other plug-ins by default. It features protections against Cross-Site Scripting (XSS), Flash XSS and clickjacking, to name a few. With most websites relying on these plug-in technologies, you effectively have to whitelist the sites for them to function. Using the NoScript status bar icon, you can whitelist on a temporary basis or add sites to your permanent whitelist. This preemptive script blocking tool is a must for any Firefox user.

BetterPrivacy

BetterPrivacy is an add-on that lets you manage LSO-cookies -- or, as they are commonly known, flash cookies. Flash cookies are a newer and more enhanced way of storing information about you and your online activities than traditional cookies. Unlike the traditional Web cookie, flash cookies don't expire and can't be deleted within the browser's interface. Even "delete your recent history" doesn't remove these "super cookies." Adobe currently only provides an online-only website storage panel to manage them, which is hardly user-or-privacy friendly. Thankfully, BetterPrivacy helps us chomp on those pesky cookies, allowing us to manage and remove them.

Adblock Plus

Adblock Plus is a simple add-on that gives granular control over page elements such as ads/banners content in your browser experience. Although it does use a region-specific block list, you can configure filters with great flexibility, blocking or allowing content as you see fit. Adblock is a God-send for those of us who don't want a Web littered with poorly targeted ads.

Foxproxy

Foxproxy is a feature-rich proxy management add-on. It allows ease and customization in managing your proxy setting. For example, you can add multiple proxies and to define how and when they are used based on URL patterns, wildcards, expressions, etc. Added support for Tor provides some privacy and anonymity.

Foxproxy even supports Tor in conjunction with Privoxy, the non-caching Web privacy enhancing proxy offering even greater potential for online privacy and anonymity.

Firebug

Although Firebug is technically a Web-development tool, it certainly holds its weight in helping protect our privacy/security. This tool allows us to monitor, debug and edit the content of any website live in any webpage within the browser. We can see all the details on the regarding HTML, CSS, Javascript and related webpage resources in great detail. It does help the more nerdy among us ascertain what's going on under the hood of a website with nicely detailed, color-coded and organized displays. It's helpful in investigating websites that seem slightly fishy.

Torbutton

Torbutton is A simple add-on that allows you to configure Firefox to use Tor. For those unfamiliar with Tor, it is a distributed, community run network that provides relative anonymity/privacy to those utilizing it. Torbutton allows for a Firefox user to easily and quickly turn on Tor for some basic anonymity in their Internet activities.

FireGPG

FireGPG is an add-on that allows integration with the cross-platform, free software encryption suite GnuPG. (GNU Privacy Guard). GnuPG is an OpenPGP standards-based free software encryption tool that allows you to encrypt and sign your communications. FireGPG allows you to encrypt, decrypt, sign, etc. directly within Firefox. FireGPG also supports direct integration with Gmail, with more webmail applications planned the near future.

Firefox is a great choice for those interested in a feature-rich, stable and secure browser. With the addition of these add-ons it proves to be a powerful tool for protecting your security and privacy. If you're not already a user I encourage you to give it a try. The dedicated nature of the Firefox community promises more innovations to look forward to in the future.

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